

- Nicolas Herman, later to be known as Brother Lawrence, a very famous monk, was born in France in 1614.
 - He was born into poverty and so was forced to join the army and fight in the 30 years war which devastated large swaths of France.
 - He fought, was captured as a spy, wounded in battle, and left the army in his 20's as the war neared its end. The horrors of what he experienced affected him deeply.
 - In June 1640, Nicolas joined a monastic community and two years later made his vows to spend the rest of his life in full time monastic service where he took the name of Lawrence, after another saint.
 - For the next 50 years, he lived a simple life with this Parisian community. It was not what we would call a glamorous life.
 - Lawrence described himself as 'a great awkward fellow who broke everything' and he entered fearing 'they would skin him alive' for his awkwardness and faults.
 - His primary assignments were working in the kitchen and, in his later years, repairing sandals.
 - He was awkward and rough. His war wounds at times got infected and this affected his mobility. He was emotionally scarred, doing work that had little value in the world, and yet his simple life and wisdom began to attract people from all over.
 - There was something different about him. He had wisdom but what really attracted people was his attitude and spirit. He was completely contented in his life. He loved others freely. He was not striving or trying to achieve. He had a joy that was infectious and a love of life that many wanted but could not find.
 - He had learned to live exactly with the kind of peace, satisfaction, security, love, freedom and joy that we, even 400 years later, crave.
-
- He did not do something different and new. He did not have a formula. He simply practiced living in the presence of God.
 - He lived the kind of life is available to us. A life where peace and worry do not dominate. Where what we do has incredible value. Where we are not beset by sins that we can't get past. A life where we are not continually wound up over relationship problems or obsessed with the politics of the day.
 - Summer is a time when many of us go on vacation, take time off, go to the shore, etc.
 - Think of the way you feel when that is happening. Relaxed, at ease, not worrying about time, money or what's next. We know there is stuff to do at home and work when we get back, but for now, that is something for the end of vacation.
 - But then we get back to work, back to the grind, back to reality, and we think, only 4 months until Christmas.
-
- It does not have to be this way.
 - We just spent four weeks with John Soper learning about how God has created us, walks with us and invites us to live more like him and experience life like the way he designed it.
 - Jesus, on his last day of life before his crucifixion, explained to his disciples, and to us, exactly what this looks like.
 - In doing so, he asks the question: "What occupies the place of highest daily priority in your life?" Your answer (and my answer) to that question decides the way you will live and experience your life.

- Before we look at Jesus actual words, we must understand the context. It was Jesus last evening with the disciples. He washed their feet to give them an example of how to live. He gave them a bewildering array of instructions that they did not understand but probably thought they had more time to figure out with Jesus help.
- Serve others. Know Jesus and you will know God. Obey all he had said. Love others the way he loved them.
- Jesus knew what was coming.
- He knew he was going to be arrested, beaten, whipped and then crucified.
- He knew that that in the process his disciples were going to be fearful and run.
- He knew that a friend was going to deny him and another would betray him.
- He knew they would be scattered and lacking direction. Even though he told him that he was leaving, it was clear that they did not understand what he was saying. They were confused with no idea of the trauma that awaited them.
- How were they to bounce back and move on from what was going to happen?
- Jesus knew this. He knew that he was going to be going back to the heavenly Father. He could even see beyond to the problems of life that they would encounter in the future when he could not physically lead them. So as he led them to the garden where he is about to be arrested, he told them something. Something that stuck with them and changes everything for them and for us.

1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. 9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.

- We are going to spend the next 4 weeks in these verses. I encourage you to read them over and over during this month.
- Today I want to set us up for the discussions in the weeks that will follow.
- You can picture Jesus walking with the disciples to or through the garden and seeing the vines which was important agriculture of that day and using this word picture that they would be totally familiar with.

1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

- This is a metaphor that they understood. Any good Jew would. Throughout the OT Scriptures, Israel is referred to as God's vineyard, his vine. They were supposed to, as a nation, be a fruitful vine that helped the entire world. He lavished attention on them but the vine became degenerate and had rotten fruit.
- There are repeated prophecies of how God was going to destroy and ultimately restore them as a result.
- Jesus is taking all this and pointing it directly at himself. I am the one who produces the kind of life and fruit that the Father intended. Not the religious rules of Judaism.
- What is he saying?

I. Jesus is the only source of life that won't disappoint.

- If anything else is your source of life, then it is false and will let you down.
- It can come through our jobs, our work. We feel alive when we are "on" and we are "the man" or "the woman" at work. We have to keep on being the best. We don't want to fail. We switch jobs any time we are in trouble. We might cut corners or act unethically in order to not lose our reputation.
- It can come through money and stuff. We feel best when we are buying something new. But the feeling only lasts for a bit. Then we need to buy more. Get more. We can end up running up debts. Expanding credit cards. Building a house of cards that can't last.
- It can be hobbies and leisure. The only time we are in a good place is when we're at the shore, away from home, playing golf, building in the garage. We end up living for the weekend. Spending all our time and energy on these things. We become obsessed. Our life becomes drudgery with flashes of fun.
- It can be negative. We run to a sinful habit to feel better. We cope through food. Drugs. Smoking. Pornography. Binge-watching Netflix. But we need more and more because it is never enough.
- It can even be religious. Following the rules. Serving poor people. Saving the environment. Doing church better than before. We get busier. Work harder. Then when others don't, we get disillusioned. We get burnt out. We feel proud or superior.
- In the end, I cannot be my own source of life and neither can anyone else. It will always disappoint. Always leaving us wanting more. It never lasts. Never fulfills long term.
- In the cross, Jesus provided everything we need for our past and future. He dealt with all of our past. He took my place. He lived the life I couldn't live and died the death I deserved to die so that we could have access personally to the source of life. That's why he will never disappoint.

1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

- This was paradigm shifting for the disciples. God was not out to demand performance from them in order to be approved. He was not a God that ruled from far away that was punishing their failures and rewarding their virtues.
- In fact, God is like the gardner. He is the planter of the vine. He is the one who cares for it. He has a vested interest in its success and fruitfulness.

II. God desire is for us to daily experience that source of life.

- Consider, he sent his son. He was so interested in you and seeing you be connected to him as the source of all fulfillment, that he sent his son to die in your place.
- The disciples needed to know that in the upcoming chaos, in the problems, the pain, the future persecution, that the Father was for them. He was constantly tending them.
- Let me tell you, it would change your life if we really grasped this truth. **Every action he takes is for your benefit.**

- Then Jesus makes the connection between the Father and himself.

3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

- They were in relationship with Jesus. They had followed him. They had chosen to give up their livelihoods and ways of life to put Jesus first. They had spent three+ years with him.
- Remember Peter told Jesus when questioned by Jesus as to whether they wanted to abandon him as many others had, "Where would we go. You have the words of life . . ."
- In essence, Jesus was telling them that they had the kind of relationship that allowed God to care for them. They were good. They were followers of Jesus. But he knew that his physical presence was about to be taken away, so he gives them this instruction:

4 *Remain in me, as I also remain in you.*

- This kind of relationship that we have had, don't stop. Keep on doing this. Don't walk away. Because:

III. We experience God by remaining in Jesus.

- Jesus commands the disciples to remain in the relationship He had established with them.
- The key word in this section is the Greek word *meno* (μένω). It is an action word, a verb, that means to continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand.
- He uses it repeatedly through this little talk with his disciples.

4 *Remain in me . . .*

No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine.

Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

If you remain in me . . .

6 *If you do not remain in me . . .*

7 *If you remain in me and my words remain in you . . .*

9 *Now remain in my love.*

- You will not find fulfillment anywhere or anything else expect from remaining in me.
- You will not accomplish anything that truly matters in this life unless it flows from remaining in me as the source of life.
- You actually will be helpless in your decisions, your actions, your energy, unless it flows from remaining in me.
- It's like he's telling his disciples, "Look, you are about to have your world turned upside down. You will not understand it. You will be fearful and worried. You will be frustrated. You will want to walk away from everything. You will be worried about what people think of you and think that you have wasted the past three years with me.
- Instead of letting all this push you away, let it bring you to me.
- **Don't let the problems of life drive you from me, let them drive you to me.**
- I am going to endure death. I am going to endure separation from God so that you, in the midst of anything in this life, never have to be separated from him.

- I wonder where you are at today.
- What is your source of life?
- What gets you out of bed? What excites you? What gives you life? What are you chasing? What drives your behavior? How do you deal with problems and sins in your life?
- **JESUS IS THE ONLY SOURCE OF LIFE THAT WILL NOT DISAPPOINT.**
- He is the true vine.
- The Father is fully committed to you and to bringing you to life in the vine. Everything he does is for your benefit.
- But only if we embrace Jesus and remain in him.
- When you encounter the difficulties or simply the daily grind of this life, does it pull you away from him or drive you towards him.
- In the next three weeks we are going to look at three things.
- How do we do this? If it's so important, how do we remain in him?
- What is our role in this? What is God's role?
- We will look at the impact of being with Jesus on what we do? What difference does it make?
- **JESUS IS THE ONLY SOURCE OF LIFE THAT WILL NOT DISAPPOINT.**